

Sterlite protests: We showed a lot of restraint, says Kapil Kumar Saratkar

A shocking clip of a policeman in plain-clothes standing atop a police van — aiming at the protestors at the distance — has gone viral on social media with human rights activists alleging that the police made targeted strikes to kill protestors in cold blood. However, what makes the video truly chilling is the audio in the video where a policeman can be heard asking the shooter to "kill at least one person."

In the video released by ANI, a policeman in plain-clothes crawls on the top of the van, resembling a commando taking his position with an assault rifle. The voices of the policemen standing around the van can be heard shouting at the shooter, with one even asking for at least one kill.

The video adds credence to the activist's charges that the police shot the protestors with the intent to kill them, as most of them suffered bullet injuries above their waists. "Most of the people killed in the police firing seem to have been hit near the chest. A 16-year-old girl killed in police firing sustained a bullet injury in her mouth," noted CPI (M) state secretary K Balakrishnan.

Henry Tiphagne, the executive director of People's Watch said that the police opened fire without any warning. "The district magistrate who is responsible for the law and order in the district was not present at the collectorate when the protestors reached there. How, then, does a district magistrate take a decision when he was not in town?" he asked. Tiphagne, who was also present at the site of the protest in Thoothukudi on Tuesday, wondered who the person shooting from the van was and was shooting at

people in what capacity. "They can be policemen or someone else. So, we need to ascertain that they are policemen," he said.

Meanwhile, deputy inspector general of police (DIG) for Tirunelveli Range Kapil Kumar Saratkar denied charges of targeted killing of the protestors. He, however, confirmed that policemen in plain-clothes were deployed. On the charges of not following the protocol on opening fire, the police officer said, "Everything was followed," adding, "It is not like suddenly something (shooting) happened...The protest rally started at a place called VVT signal and culminated at Collectorate. Lots of warnings were given to protesters to disperse, but to protect life and property at the collectorate, the police had to resort to firing."

"We showed a lot of restraint in our action," he claimed.

INTENT TO KILL?

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